

In the March 30th issue of ITB, my good friends on the editorial page of the paper took some issue with my RTA/Road Repair proposal. Maybe. I've read through their points several times and am still trying to figure out if the editorial is satire, and in fact they're in agreement. Let's go through their points:

First the edit board says the RTP was an 'extraordinary coming together of interests' and because it included so many diverse component parts, it cannot be touched. Good enough, but they also point out that it took 4 tries to get sufficient ornaments on the Christmas tree so that enough people found something they liked and jumped on board. My suggestion does not tear down the tree, or even remove any of the ornaments. It simply says, let's see if we might want to change the color or size of some of what's hanging on the tree - and save taxpayer money. ITB has raised concerns that are similar to mine about bloated County bond packages in the past.

Next the edit board said that because the City Council voted unanimously to adopt the RTP, it should not be challenged. Really? Inside Tucson Business now embraces a 7-0 Council vote as the standard by which we are to judge the sanctity of a plan or an ordinance. This was the point in reading the editorial at which I began to become suspicious that it wasn't on the up and up.

The third point was that even if we dispute some of the projects, none of us should be able to remove any of them (they cite "even the streetcar.") But remember, nothing in my proposal suggests that we remove anything from the plan. I'm simply asking that we embrace a second look at the scope of what has been proposed and see if there might be more effective ways to spend taxpayer dollars while still honoring the spirit of the RTP.

They say that the RTP was about capacity, not repairs. Later they say that moving money into road maintenance from the RTA sales tax is "subterfuge." It's not subterfuge to suggest a simple reallocation of existing tax dollars to take care of an immediate problem. This should be the defining issue of this election cycle in our City, and in fact in the Region. Fix what we have before building a larger infrastructure that will only increase that maintenance obligation.

The edit board says we need to keep our promises, and that the RTA has done "a remarkable job" of staying on task and delivering projects as promised. In fact, the truth is that the RTA considers turning a shovel of dirt as having "implemented" a project. The voters might have been surprised had they been told that "staying on task" was not completing the work identified in the Plan, but merely starting multiple projects all around the Region and struggling with another \$152M bond offering to keep the multiple balls juggling in the air. ITB is about business. Recognizing a bad business model should be in their wheelhouse. Overextending and over committing is a bad business model.

The derogatory statements about the City being "unaccustomed to keeping promises," or my suggestion being based on "a politician's whim" are beneath the level of discourse generally found in ITB. It's not 'whimsical' to suggest the following: The economy has fundamentally changed since 2006 when the RTP was adopted. The road conditions

certainly have deteriorated. We need big suggestions to tackle a big problem. Continuing with incremental band-aid approaches is only going to result in the infrastructure of this region deteriorating to much more significant levels, and the costs for reconstruction becoming so large that following the ITB game plan will force an increase in taxes to address the issue. Businesses don't need higher property taxes. Homeowners don't need higher property taxes. My proposal does not result in either of those.